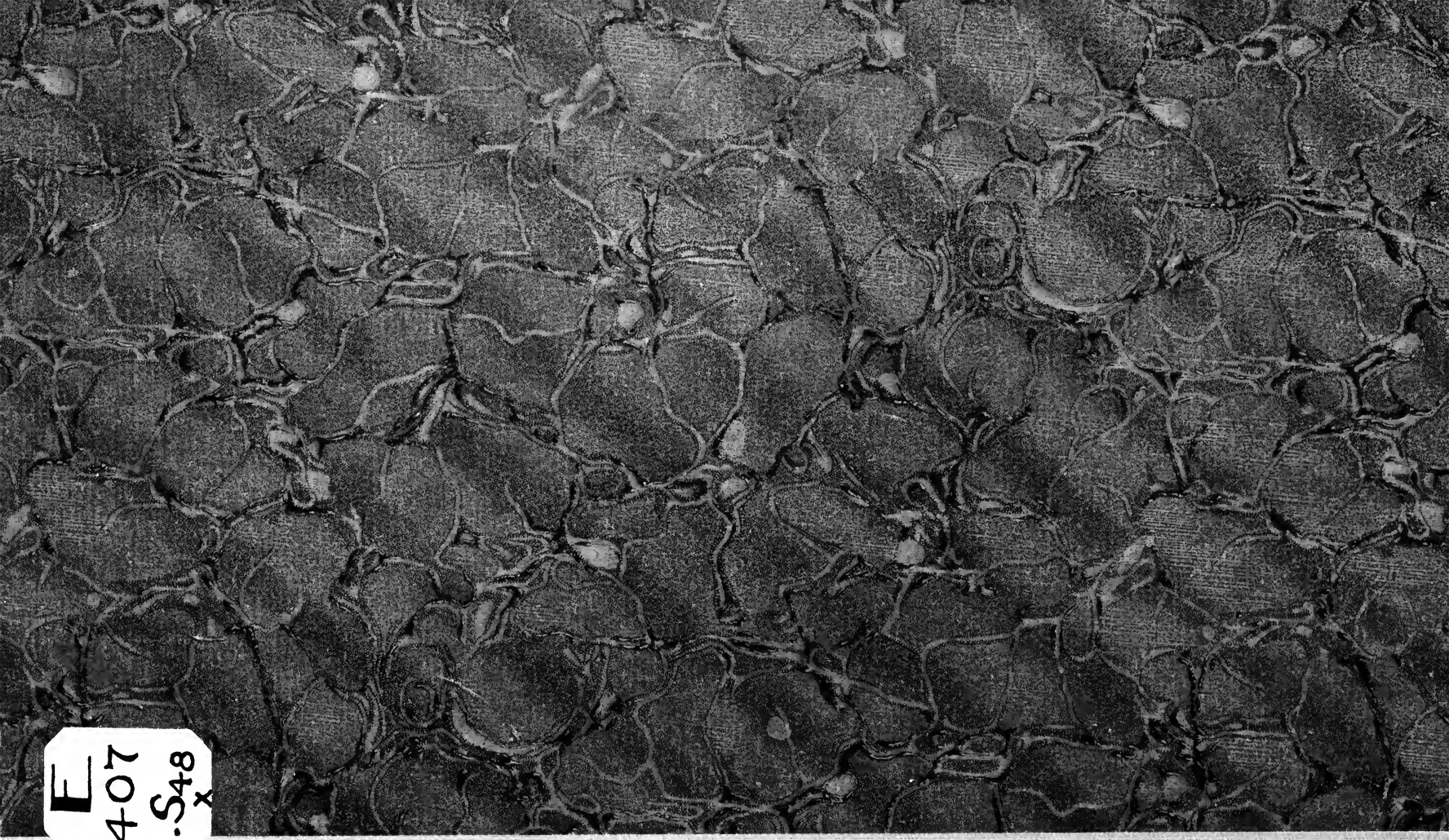

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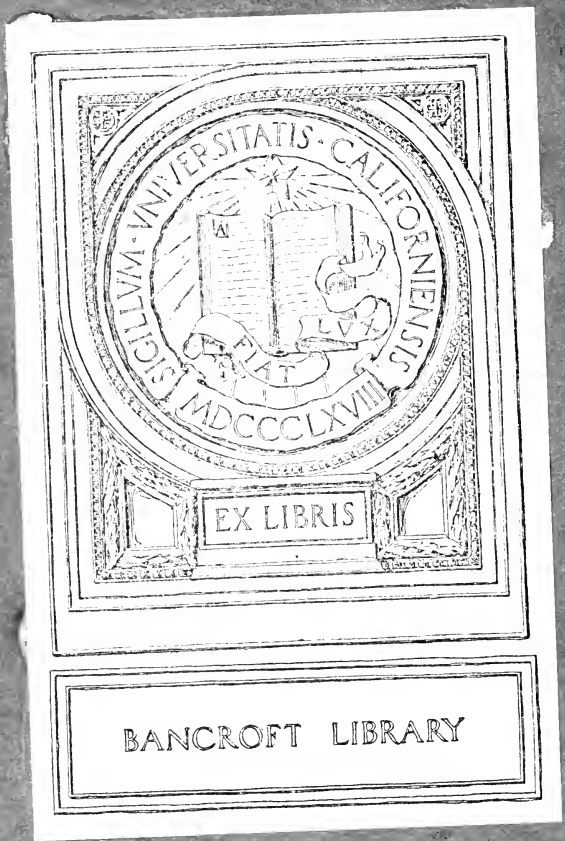
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SPEECH

OF

MR. HENRY I. SEAMAN, OF N. Y.,

ON

THE MEXICAN WAR,

AND

OHTER MEASURES OF THE ADMINISTRATION.

Delivered in the House of Representatives of the U. S., Feb. 13, 1847.

WASHINGTON:
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SPEECH.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, the bill to place at the disposal of the President of the United States the sum of THREE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS "to enable him to conclude a treaty of peace with the Republic of Mexico," with the *proviso* of Mr. WILMOT "that there shall be neither SLAVERY NOR INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE in any territory on the Continent of America which shall hereafter be acquired by, or annexed to, the United States by virtue of this appropriation, or in any other manner whatsoever," being under discussion—

MR. SEAMAN said:

MR. CHAIRMAN: Some of the measures of this Congress are as extraordinary as they are important. The acquisition of territory by annexation and compromise—a change in our system of keeping and disbursing the public moneys—an entire remodelling of our revenue laws—a war of conquest, and a national debt, are among its prominent features. We have escaped a war with England, and are engaged in a war with Mexico. Some of these measures are grave and great questions. As I have and am to take my part, with others, in disposing of these measures, I claim the right to give my views to this House and to the country upon some of them. I do not expect to bring to the discussion of these topics any thing that is new or interesting; but I shall speak freely, and, I trust, honestly.

The objects contemplated by this bill are of momentous importance. It is said by some of its friends that it involves the grave question of peace or war, and by others that of freedom or slavery. Never since the organization of the Government have subjects of a more grave character than these been presented to the consideration of Congress. And I believe that posterity will point to the 29th Congress as an era in our national history. Sir, I trust a gracious Providence will overrule all for good; but I fear the result will be otherwise.

It is claimed, by the friends of this bill, that it will place at the disposal of the President the means of securing a peace with Mexico. I do not believe that a result so desirable will flow from it. Suppose the bill of the last session had become a law, does any one believe that we would have had a peace with Mexico before this? No, sir; no one thinks so. But, Mr. Chairman, I shall give the same vote now I gave the last session, and, with the proviso of the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WILMOT) added to the bill, I intend to vote for it. I confess, I care but little what be comes of the bill as reported, for I look for no beneficial result from it; but I am ready to go with him who will go the farthest in efforts to secure a peace,

and the President shall not charge me with withholding from him the requisite means of terminating hostilities. But, sir, I will hold him to a strict account before the country for the disposition he makes of the money, should the bill become a law.

While I feel no interest in the bill, I do feel a deep interest in the proviso. I regard the bill as something bordering on the ridiculous. To what purpose is the money to be applied—to whom is it to be paid? If it is to bribe the Mexican General, and make him a traitor to his country, then, sir, it is as wicked as it is ridiculous. Is this the *honorable* peace which we hear so much about? Perhaps, sir, it is a part of the *contract* made with Santa Anna, and the President may think it would be *dishonorable* in him not to comply.

Mr. Chairman, since I took my seat in this House I have not given a vote which I consider of more importance than the vote upon this proviso; and, should I remain here a dozen years, I do not believe I should be called upon to give one which those who come after us will consider as equally important. The passage of it by this Congress (which I hardly dare hope for) will exert a great moral influence upon this country, and, I may say, upon the world; and however the money part of the bill may subject us to suspicion and ridicule, the moral influence which the proviso will exert, will compensate for it all, and even more, and will determine me to vote for both, as both must go together. The bill requires "that full and accurate account of these expenditures shall be by the President transmitted to Congress as soon as practicable." I dare not believe that the President will dispose of this money in a way inconsistent with his high office, and dishonorable to the country. He must account to Congress for the use he makes of it.

This question of slavery is not a question merely of policy; it is a question of principle. Human freedom and the rights of man are involved in it. To my mind it contravenes the great law of nature. It is not consistent with the great principles of our holy faith, and it gives the lie to the Declaration of Independence. I have no desire to be drawn into a discussion of slavery, as guarantied to the old States under the Constitution. I do not feel myself competent to the task. It is a question we have nothing to do with here. The matter which we now have to consider is, the acquisition of territory, and whether slavery shall be permitted in it.

Mr. Chairman, I was one of fifty-eight who, on the 10th December, 1845, voted against the admission of Texas into the Union. I have never regretted I gave that vote, and I do not believe I ever shall. I then considered, as I do now, that the faith of the Government of the United States was pledged to Texas by the joint resolutions, approved March 1st, 1845, to admit her into the Union, provided, when she presented herself with her Constitution for admission, there was nothing in it inconsistent with those resolutions. But, sir, I found in her Constitution, among other objectionable features, a provision "that the Legislature shall have no power to pass laws for the emancipation of slaves," &c., &c. As far back as 1824 or '5, by a decree of the Mexican Government, slavery was abolished in all her provinces, including Texas. When the final act of annexation was to be accomplished, at the period I have referred to, our votes were invoked to

expel this extensive region "from the area of freedom," and to perpetuate slavery over its entire surface, in violation of the spirit and letter of the joint resolutions admitting her into the Union. For these reasons, and others which I might state, I voted against admitting her into the Union. Had a majority of this House voted with me, this war with Mexico would have been avoided.

With this lesson before us, we are told that this proviso is premature; that we ought to wait until we get the territory before we legislate about it. Sir, as a northern man, I do not think it is ever premature to enact laws to keep slavery within its present limits. The North never will consent to a further extension of the institution; and, if any of those who represent her interests on this floor prove "traitors," I leave them to the tender mercies of their constituents.

I have no desire to wound the feelings of any member of this House, but this is a question which must be met, and this I consider the very time to meet it, when we are about to have an extensive region added to our territory; and, should we defer any longer some definite action upon it, we are only putting off the evil day.

I will not disguise the fact, that I have an abhorrence of slavery. It is a moral evil, which God has permitted, in his inscrutable wisdom, for some wise purpose, and which some succeeding age may see developed. I cannot discover in it one redeeming principle, and I firmly believe that, under the benign influence of the Gospel, it will one day cease to exist. When I hear honorable members of this House speak of it as "God's own institution," and argue that "slaves are property," comparing them to "horses, houses, and carriages," this, too, with the Bible, and Declaration of Independence, "read and known of all," there is, to my mind, something anti-christian and anti-republican in it. Perhaps my feelings may be over-sensitive on the subject, but there are scenes enacted here, in this capital of the nation, and almost under the dome of this temple, consecrated to liberty, at which humanity shudders and weeps. I could relate an occurrence which took place in this city a few days since, and was witnessed by myself and other members of this House. But the recital would be as offensive to gentlemen from the South, as it was disgusting to those who witnessed it. I would not be understood as supposing that scenes like this are of frequent occurrence. God forbid that they should be; but it is enough for me to have witnessed one such, and to know that they are incident to slavery. It is scenes like this which make men of the North believe that slavery

> —— "Is a monster of such hideous mien,
> That to be hated needs but to be seen."

Mr. Chairman, the United States is at war with a sister republic—it is said that it was forced upon us by the act of Mexico. We are told in the Bible that "war springs from our lusts." I think this Mexican war is a confirmation of the truth of Scripture. How was this war brought upon us? It had its origin in the annexation of Texas, and is to be carried on to perpetuate the principles of that measure—slavery, and extension of territory. The consequences of that unwise measure were predicted, with remarkable accuracy, by the great statesman of Kentucky,

In Mr. Clay's Raleigh letter, on the question of the annexation of Texas, he used the following words:

"Under these circumstances, if the Government of the United States were to acquire Texas, it would acquire along with it all the incumbrances which Texas is under, and among them the actual or suspended war between Mexico and Texas. Of that consequence there cannot be a doubt. *Annexation and war with Mexico are identical.* Now, for one, I certainly am not willing to involve the country in a foreign war for the object of acquiring Texas. * * * I regard all wars as great calamities, to be avoided, if possible, and honorable peace as the wisest and truest policy of the country."

In another part of the same letter, Mr. Clay said, that the consequence of annexation would be to involve us "*certainly* in war with Mexico."

This great man was not alone on this question; others, the greatest minds, and the best men of the country, were found side by side with him. It would seem that they were gifted with prophetic vision. His integrity on this question lost him the Presidency. Had he been placed in the Executive chair, which his talents, and long services to his country, entitled him to be, this war would not have had an existence.

I question if any man in the country, divested of party feeling, and whose opinion is entitled to the least consideration, will contend that we would have had this war with Mexico if General Taylor had not been ordered to advance from Corpus Christi to Matamoras. It is folly to suppose that this feeble and faction-torn people, which had for seven years neglected to assert her declared right over Texas, should attempt its invasion after the annexation of that province to the United States. No man can for one moment credit such an absurdity. We are not left to conjecture upon this point. She was ready to negotiate the question of boundary if the United States would send a special minister for that purpose. The resolution of annexation left the question of boundary open to negotiation, and certainly intimated to Mexico a desire, on the part of Congress, to settle with her upon amicable terms. Had the President yielded a mere point of etiquette, and sent a special minister to Mexico, a resort to arms would have been avoided. But no, the President had his own plans to carry out, and this war is the consequence. All the causes which are enumerated by the President in vindication of his course, had existed for a long term of years, and yet no one, either in Mexico or this country, believed that a war would result from them. Most of our difficulties had been settled by negotiation, although some portion of the stipulated indemnity remained unpaid; but was that a sufficient cause for war? Certainly not. The real cause was, as I have stated, in ordering General Taylor to advance to the Rio Grande. Here was the fatal error. It was the first act of hostility, and the President must have known that it would bring a collision; and, from the orders issued by the Navy and War Departments, about that time, he evidently intended that it should. Certainly, "we began the process by planting our army in the midst of Mexican plantations and homesteads, driving before us her citizens, her soldiers, and her civil authorities. A collision having necessarily supervened on Mexican ground, between armed detachments of both nations, war did most 'naturally' follow."

I have ever entertained but one opinion of this war—that it was provoked by the President—was unnecessary and unjust, and that it is waged for conquest. The President says, in his annual message, that those who entertain such opinions, and assert them, are extending "aid and comfort to the enemy." Why, sir, has it come to this, that the Congress of the United States, when such a grave question as war is before it, must withhold all opposition to the Executive measures, or rest under the imputation of being enemies to their country? Freedom of discussion is a cherished principle with the American people, and the man who would deprive them of it, needs but the opportunity to play the tyrant.

Mr. Chairman, we have heard a great deal said about the law of nations, and the rights of the conqueror over the conquered; and we have heard ingenious arguments in support of our rights over the conquered provinces of Mexico. Well, this may be all so; but I contend that we have no rights, if the war was wrong and unjust in its inception, and such I contend it was. I do not profess to know much about the law of nations, but I do profess to know something of that great moral law, which is binding upon men and angels. Nations are made up of individuals, and the obligations of this law are as binding upon one as much as the other, and each are responsible to a higher power than the mere opinion of the world. We profess, sir, to be a Christian people. The melioration of the condition of man is the great principle of our age and country. The advance of mind, and the extension of the benign influences of civilization and Christianity, are among the characteristics of our day. Good men are devising means to alleviate the evils and to increase the happiness of man. Millions are annually expended to promote all these objects, and I verily believe the day is not far distant, when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war any more."

I have said that this war was wrong in principle and unjust in its inception. It is a lust for territory. New Mexico and California must be ceded to us, or there will be no peace. This I suppose to be that for which we are contending, and for this we are content to send our fellow-citizens to a pestilential climate, to be hurried by "vomito" or slaughter to their final account. I shudder at the thought of a result so awful, and I would not for the world take the responsibility of it. We are told of the glory this war will shed over our country. There can be no glory without principle, and no principle in a departure from that rule of doing "unto others, as we would that they should do unto us."

But this war is as unsound in policy as it is in principle. It is waged for territory. Suppose this had been declared by the President when he called for men and money, after the battles of Palo Alta and Resaca de la Palma, would we have placed at his disposal ten millions of dollars and fifty thousand men? Certainly not. For what do we desire more territory? Is it to disturb the compromises of the Constitution, and to give a preponderance to the institution of slavery? What section of the Union can desire the territory in question? Can it serve any good purpose to the West, to bring millions of acres of land into competition with, and to retard the settlement of, that yet unpeopled and magnificent region? We of the North do not want it. Do the South desire it? Short-sighted, indeed, must be that south-

ern man who will venture to rouse up the spirit which has already manifested itself. Time will demonstrate, that he was the best friend to his country, who opposed the addition of even a single acre of Mexican territory.

Mr. Chairman, I hold the President responsible for this war. He committed the first act of hostility, and which he must have known would result in collision, and it is therefore truly his war. To whom else can it be attributed—not to the war-making power of the United States, for the President never consulted Congress, then in session, until he had committed a hostile act, by crossing a disputed boundary, and invading Mexican territory. He pursued a very different course towards England on the Oregon question, although he asserted our title was clear and unquestionable to the whole territory.

We hear much said about the honor of the country in relation to this war. Well, sir, I may not have *as much refinement* of feeling as some men, but I have no idea of honor without justice, and when we talk of the honor of conquering a weak adversary, we misapply the term. "What can be more for the honor of the nation than its being governed by justice, by humanity, by magnanimity? Are not the opposite qualities incompatible with the national honor?"

I have not much faith in this magic word called honor. I cannot find it in calling our citizens from their homes and families, and sending them by hundreds and thousands to die by pestilence or fall in battle, whatever may be the prowess of their arms.

This war, from its inception to this hour, reflects no honor upon the country, except the skill, bravery, and noble bearing of the gallant general and the army under his command. War is the exercise of a most fearful power; always bringing in its train the most direful consequences, costing millions of money and rivers of blood, and spreading abroad a demoralizing influence that years will not overcome. I will not attempt a description of the horrors which follow in its train; it is the most direful of all calamities that can befal both the victors and the vanquished; it brings curses upon both, commensurate with the base and wicked passions which it engenders, and ours is the country in which a maximum of these evils must be felt. We have no excess of population. Our soldiers are the farmers, mechanics, and laborers of the country, engaged in times of peace in the various pursuits of the land. What will be the condition of those who return and are disbanded—injured in morals, in health, as well as in capacity to return to their former pursuits. And yet, strange to say, that "this mass of human suffering awakens comparatively little thought, and calls forth little sympathy." "We shed the blood of our fellow-creatures, and shout exultingly over victories which carry desolation and wo into thousands of families."

An English writer, in his "reflections on war," says: "What a scene must a field of battle present, where the slain are left without assistance and without pity, with their wounds exposed to the piercing air. Far from their native home, no tender assiduities of friendship, no well-known voice, no wife, or mother, or sister, is near to soothe their sorrows."

Is this a picture too highly colored? Hear what a young soldier, who was in the fight at Monterey, says, in writing to his friends at home. (I read from his letter:)

"During the fight of the second day a flag of cessation was sent to the Mexicans, requesting a few hours to bury the dead, which were strewn in frightful piles over the field. This was refused, and the wounded and dead lay where they fell, beneath the rays of a scorching sun, till the battle was ended. It was then almost impossible for our men to endure the stench while they heaped dirt over the poor fellows where they lay. The bodies of the dead were as black as coals; many of them were stripped of their clothing by the Mexicans during the night. Several of those who were wounded during the first day's fight, crawled into ditches and holes to avoid the balls which were rolling like hail stones over the field, whence, exhausted by the loss of blood, they were unable to crawl, or give signs of distress. As a consequence many perished, though some who were found in this condition were removed, and are recovering."

But to return to the same English writer. He says: "If statesmen, if *Christian statesmen*, had a proper feeling on this subject, and would open their hearts to the reflections which such scenes must inspire, instead of rushing eagerly to arms, from the thirst of conquest, or the thirst for gain, would they not hesitate long, would they not try every expedient, every lenient act consistent with duty, before they ventured on this desperate remedy, or rather, before they plunged into this gulf of horror?"

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But when this war is to cease is a question of great importance, and very difficult to answer. If not until Mexico agrees to give up her provinces, the day is remote. They are a race proverbial for their pride and arrogance. And who is to make the peace is a question difficult to solve. Should Santa Anna accept our three millions, who knows but a revolution may place some other general at the head of the government, who will have his price too. Look at this war in whatever light we may, and it is not in human foresight to predict how, or when, it is to cease. With all my heart I shall hail the day, come when it may, which will secure a peace, and put an end to this miserable strife. I had no part nor lot in bringing it upon us; I will take none in carrying it on. I would this day vote for a resolution instructing the President to order our troops back to the Rio Grande, and, in order to secure a peace without further loss of life, across the disputed boundary. I believe such a proceeding would be one of policy; I know it would be one of justice and humanity. "What a monstrous absurdity would it not be to go on fighting until we have wasted fifty millions of dollars more than the fifty which we have already spent, (if all the accounts were in and paid) to obtain what we could have readily purchased without going to war—and possibly might be able to purchase now for a tenth part of the money; and (O how transcendently more worthy of consideration!) without the sacrifice of a single life of those dear friends, beloved companions, and countrymen of ours, who have fallen in the fight, or who—far direr fate—victims to an unnatural climate, are now mingled with the clods of the valley.

The war we are waging I deem wholly inconsistent with the spirit of our institutions. It was never contemplated by the framers of the Constitution, who wisely left the question of peace or war with Congress, that a President of the United States should do that *indirectly* which he had no power to do *directly*. The President tells us about the outrages inflicted upon us by Mexico, and talks about indemnity. Indemnity for what—the cost of the war, or what Mexico owes us? The high value some place upon her provinces might, in their estimation, furnish indemnity for these; but,

sir, will it furnish indemnity for the hundreds slain upon the field of battle, or who have fallen by the disease of a sickly climate? Will it wipe out the black stain upon the annals of our country? Will it restore to life, and to their country, a Ringgold, a Watson, a Ridgely, a Cross, a Cochran, and others equally worthy, who have fallen? What indemnity has he to offer to the widowed mothers and helpless orphan children? Will it restore a leg or an arm to the unfortunate cripple who was wounded in the fight? Will it restore the shattered constitution of the diseased soldier? Will it make the poor and degraded debauchee the moral, perchance the Christian, man the war found him? Will it provide the means to pay the hundreds of additional pensioners? No, Mr. Chairman; demand indemnity for all these, and Mexico would not be left with an acre to stand upon.

But, Mr. Chairman, there are other and very serious objections to this war; indeed, sir, their name is "legion." It is not only unsound in policy and principle, but it is a flagrant act of injustice to the people of the United States. It has entirely engrossed the legislation of Congress. Public business, not growing out of the war, is wholly or nearly neglected. The private claims upon the Government have also been disregarded. The President, at the commencement of the session, in his annual message, suggested this course. Hear what he says, sir—"During the existence of the war with Mexico, all our resources should be husbanded, and no appropriations made, except such as are absolutely necessary for its vigorous prosecution," &c. "By the observance of this policy at your present session, large amounts may be saved to the Treasury." How faithfully has his party in this House followed his bidding. All the other great interests of the country have been overlooked in the efforts to carry on this war "vigorously." Look, sir, at the calendar, and see the vast amount of important public business which will not be touched this session. From all sections of the country, appeals are made to Congress for legislation upon measures of public interest. But, sir, not only must all the "*resources*" of the Government be "*husbanded*" for the "*vigorous prosecution*" of the war, but the whole session has been wasted in legislation connected with it. Look, also, at the private claims upon the Government, and tell me, sir, what justice can the claimants expect from this Congress, with this war of the President's upon our hands? There is no time to do justice to them now. Has there ever been a session of Congress, since the adoption of the Constitution, when the great interests of the country, public and private, have been so entirely neglected as at this session? And, Mr. Chairman, this is not all; appropriations made at the last session for the construction of important public works will be retained in the Treasury, and all work suspended during the continuance of the war. The resources of the Government must be "*husbanded*," and hence the necessity of suspending all public works, except "*such as are absolutely necessary*" to carry it on. During the last session of Congress, it was my good fortune to carry through this House (and it also passed the Senate) a bill for the construction of defensive works at the Narrows in the harbor of New York. It was a measure of great difficulty, and had been before Congress for many years. To my great regret, I learn that the sum ($100,000) appropriated for that object is needed in the Trea-

sury to carry on the war with "*vigor*," and that the work will be suspended until we secure an "*honorable peace*" with Mexico.

It has been well said, that "misfortunes never come alone." The measures of the Administration approve the saying. In addition to the war, the Subtreasury scheme has been put in operation. I suppose it will have to work its own cure, as it did under the Van Buren administration. But for party consistency, the Administration would now recommend its repeal. It has not been in full operation two months, and a bill has been reported to us materially modifying its provisions. Why have not the Administrtiaon the honesty to come out, and say it will not work, and recommend Congress to repeal it? If the measure was not fraught with mischief, the best way to let the people become acquainted with it, would be to test its operation upon the varied interests of the country. But the Administration do not, and cannot, carry the specie-clause into effect; it is not practicable. They were told it was a measure of mischief, and but for the act of the last session, authorizing the issue of Treasury notes, (which were used as currency,) the Secretary of the Treasury could not have carried on the Government. It is considered by all intelligent merchants, and practical men, who are not bound by party ties, an unfortunate and an unwise measure.

The failure of the crops throughout Europe, and the famine in Ireland, have opened to us an extensive market for all our agricultural productions; and but for this, with a war on our hands, the Subtreasury, and importations far exceeding in amount our ordinary exports, we should have had before this a sad state of affairs. Flour and provisions would have gone down to a point lower than they have reached in many years, and commercial embarrassment must have followed. The large amount of specie coming into the country, consequent upon increased exports, is, under existing circumstances, of essential benefit. But will this state of things continue—can we keep it here? Specie which flows into a country in a regular course of trade, must, of necessity, enrich the country. But that which is now coming, comes from causes that will cease to exist on the return of an abundant harvest in Europe. With a diminished, and diminishing demand for our products, and an increased importation which will take place under the present tariff, this specie will go back to Europe, and perhaps more with it.

I trust, sir, we may not realize anything of this kind; but should it come, then the Subtreasury will be felt; and, I fear, severely felt. The Government would have the power to crush every monied institution in the country; and if exercised, a suspension of specie payments by the banks would take place, and the credit of the country would be ruined. A specie circulation we can never have, unless we are content to go back to the dark ages. There are manifold inconsistencies and inconveniences arising from it.

The weakness and wickedness of this measure have been so thoroughly exposed, and with such signal ability, by my friend and colleague from the city of New York, (Mr. MILLER,) that it is not worth while for me to consume my time, or the time of the committee, in discussing it.

Mr. Chairman, money, we are told, is the "sinews of war," and is indispensable in its prosecution. How does the Administration propose to

obtain it? Will it resort to direct taxation? How does it propose to carry on this war? The country will not sanction an accumulating debt. We have been experimenting upon our revenue system, and have reduced our receipts, when the exigencies of the country demanded a material increase. We have repealed the tariff of 1842, which, although defective in some of its details, brought more prosperity to the country than any which preceded it, and was yielding the largest amount of revenue. We have substituted for it a system which will not meet the expectation of its friends as a revenue measure, and this at the very time we had this war on our hands. And why was this act repealed at such a moment? Why, sir, because a visionary Secretary of the Treasury asserted that "the lowest rate of duty would yield the largest amount of revenue." And one of his party adherents on this floor ventured the wild assertion, that a uniform duty of five per cent. would yield a larger amount than a higher rate. It was shown in both ends of this Capitol, that the proposed change in the tariff would result in a large diminution of the revenue from imports. And the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. WEBSTER) showed most satisfactorily to my mind, and I believe to every unprejudiced man in the country, that upon only six articles of import there would be a falling off in the revenue of over three millions of dollars. And he was sustained in this opinion by an intelligent merchant of the city of New York, a friend of the Administration, whose letter he read to the Senate, and which has been spread before the country. It is but a little more than one year since the Secretary of the Treasury made to Congress his report on finance, and upon which report the present tariff act was framed. One of the prominent features of that report is, as I have said, that low duties yield the largest revenue; this seems to have been then the cherished opinion of the Secretary.

But let us look at his report, made to the Senate a few days since, and we will find that he has changed his ground. He seems to have discovered that an increase of duty on many articles will increase the revenue. He is no doubt correct; and had he proposed a fair revision of the act, I would have had charity to believe that he was honest in what he said; but the report is a little contemptible, electioneering document, betraying incapacity and ignorance; a mere trick, to gain a party advantage—to soothe Pennsylvania and Louisiana by an increased duty on coal, iron, and sugar. It is a direct appeal to the working classes; recommends among other articles an increase of the duty on cloths and cassimeres costing over four dollars the square yard; on printed calicoes costing over thirty cents; and on shirting muslin costing over twenty cents; with a reduction of duty on some few articles. Why, sir, does he expect that such goods will be imported? A cassimere at four dollars is an article rarely seen, and the other articles are rarely imported. I have neither time or disposition to pursue this report; its aim and object is to make political capital, rather than to increase the revenue.

I have a few words to say in relation to the tariff act of the last session. The Secretary is right; it does require revision; a change in it is certainly demanded. But before I can vote for any alteration, or a tax upon the free list, I must have the principles of the tariff of 1842 restored. REVENUE,

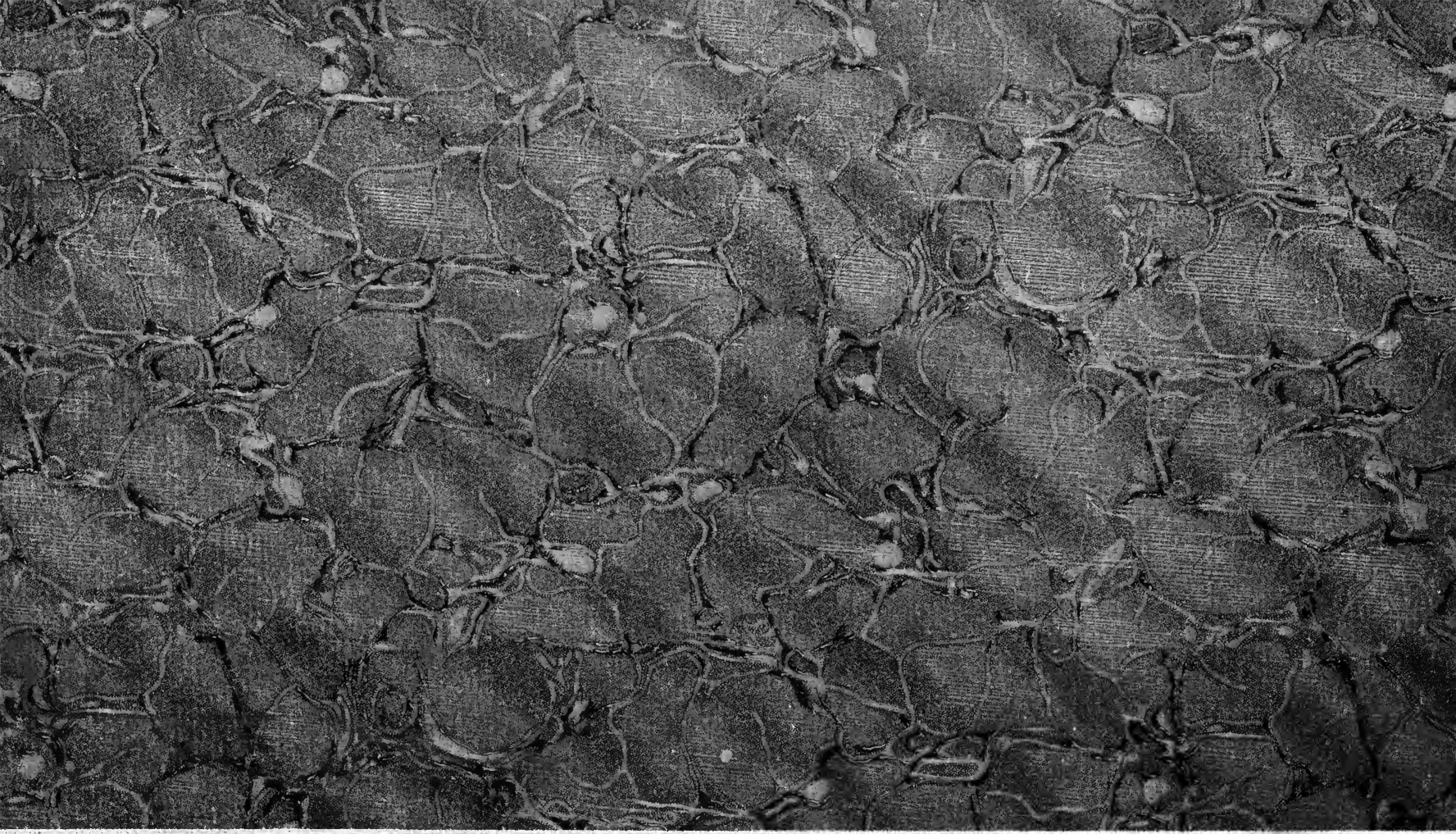
with protection to AMERICAN LABOR, is what I contend for, and I will never yield the principle until I am satisfied of my error.

This question of protection can never be too often agitated in this Hall. It is the duty of those who believe in it to keep it before this House and the country. Is this nation to avail itself of the blessings showered upon it by a benign Providence, in the abundance of every raw material used by man in a state of civilization, for the purposes for which they were given; or is it, like the unprofitable steward, to bury them in the earth? What was it that our fathers had in view in severing the links of the chain which bound us to the old world? It was to liberate man; to raise the masses above the will of the privileged few; to make this country *independent* in the most enlarged sense of the term. Our country is blessed, as I have said, with all the raw material which are the sources of national wealth and individual comfort. But they are of no value in the raw state. It is not these which require protection, so much as the labor requisite to bring them into use. What nation has ever preserved its greatness or independence, except in so far as it fostered and sustained its own labor; the history of the world proves this. It is the policy of Europe to keep the masses down; to cheapen labor; to make man a mere physical being; to keep him in a degraded condition. Our policy should be to elevate him. Man is cheaper in the old world than in the new. What is the condition of the laboring classes in almost every quarter of Europe? Why, sir, the industrious and hard-working laborer cannot earn more by incessant toil than barely sustains life in a miserable condition, and deprived of all animal food. This it is that makes protective duties necessary, that we may not, by importing the products of this degraded labor, reduce its wages to nearly the same standard in the United States.

I do not wish to enter upon a tedious argument in support of this doctrine of protection; but, in a political point of view, I consider it paramount to all others—the great American principle, which will one day be the dividing line between the two great parties of the country, and but for the war, in which the country is now involved, would have been the prominent question of this session. Even at this moment I deem it of importance to call the attention of the country to it. We find that attempts have been made, and are still being made, to deceive the people into a belief that they will be benefited by the importation of foreign products, when thus to import them is to give admission to degraded labor to the great injury of the working classes.

We have been told, here in this Hall, that the present foreign demand for our breadstuffs and provisions has been caused by the repeal of the tariff act of 1842, and the other measures of Mr. Polk's Administration; that the people of the country believed it. What nonsense! Do gentlemen really suppose that the American people are so ignorant as not to understand this? Did the tariff of 1846 cause the potato-rot and famine in Ireland, and the short crop on the continent of Europe? Sir, it is the misfortune of others which has caused this demand for our products; and while it has saved our country from serious embarrassment, we ought not to speak of it in a spirit of vain boasting.

The productions of the convicts at the Sing Sing State prison are pre-

cisely like the productions of the pauper laborers of Europe, inasmuch as the State was contented to sell the products of their labor at lower prices than would remunerate the honest mechanic; and when the effect of this degradation—this cheapening of man—was so near home, our mechanics did not fail to perceive it, and to protest against it, until the employment of the convicts in the State prison at Sing Sing was, in a measure, abandoned.

I call upon all who feel any interest in the laboring classes—the nine-tenths of the people of the United States—to ponder well these things. Experience may be appealed to with the greatest confidence. Let our records be searched and examined, and they will prove that, whenever the labor of the country has been fully protected, as it was by the tariffs of 1828, 1832, and 1842, the people of all denominations were fully employed at good remunerating wages; and when they were not so protected, (as in 1841, for instance,) the industry of the whole country was paralyzed from the introduction of this pauper labor of the old world. I am surprised, sir, that the great question of protection has not been brought into the discussions of the present session. It is incidental to our whole system of finance, and might have been appropriately introduced. I fear the people will think that the principle has been yielded to our opponents, and that we have all become the advocates of free trade. I cannot dismiss this subject without sounding an alarm, that those who earn their bread by their daily toil may arouse themselves, lest they should discover, when it is too late, that this doctrine of free trade, or low duties, carried out, may make man as cheap in the United States as he is now in Europe.